



The Girl Connection

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE ADOLESCENT FEMALES INVOLVED WITH OR AT RISK FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM
THE IOWA GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES TASK FORCE / SPRING 2002

Strong, Smart and Bold: Empowering Girls for Life

Girls, Inc., a web magazine for girls, published its first book for the general public, *Strong, Smart and Bold: Empowering Girls for Life* (Cliff Street Books/Harper Collins). The book provides adults with activities, information, and resources to talk and relate to girls about the important social issues they face. The following are just two of the interactive activities you will find.

Values Voting

Encourage a girl to choose between the following responses: agree, undecided, or disagree, in reply to a list of statements expressing a range of values. For example, how does she respond to the statement “A woman should be married before she considers having a baby?” If she agrees with this statement, begin a conversation with her about it. What does she see as the advantages of being married when you have a child? What does a child need that a married mother can provide? What makes a good marriage?

This activity creates a safe space for a girl to explore and express what she really feels about a particular issue or idea without fearing that she will be ostracized, punished, or judged harshly for her views. These value statements also offer you an opportunity to initiate conversations about difficult topics, to find out what kind of information a girl is getting from the media and people closest to her, and to observe how she is processing that information.

Sample Value Statements

- ☞ Female athletes are not feminine.
- ☞ A woman is not complete until she has a baby.
- ☞ It’s better to say what you really feel, even if it means hurting someone’s feelings.
- ☞ Couples who fight are going to break up or get a divorce.
- ☞ People who cry when they’re upset are healthier than people who don’t cry.
- ☞ You should always think before you speak.
- ☞ Men should not have to take responsibility for birth control – that’s the woman’s job.
- ☞ If there were more professional women’s sports

teams, they would probably have as many fans as the men’s teams.

- ☞ Women should make as much money as men make for doing the same job.
- ☞ The president has to be a man, because women are not as strong in making decisions.

Did you learn anything that you did not already know about the girl in your life? Does she enjoy talking about her values? Does she appear to take pride in her beliefs? Weave this activity into your lives by drawing on relevant examples from the culture to keep the conversations going. When your daughter or niece or mentee learned that a six-year-old girl was shot at school, how did she respond? What does she believe is the solution to the problem of violence in schools?

It may seem too sophisticated or scary a topic for a very young girl, but if she has heard about the shooting, odds are she is thinking about it.

While doing this activity, be sure that you also share your values, even when your views are very different. Let a girl know what you think, let her know why, and then leave it at that. Your goal should not be to change each other’s minds, but rather to express a viewpoint and feel secure in your relationship, despite differences of opinion. This builds trust in open communication and helps you get to know one another better. More important, it gives a safe place to practice expressing her feelings honestly, rather than bottling them up or deciding that they don’t matter.

The Mother/Daughter Portrait

Mother and daughter (or any adult and the girl they know) create portraits of each other. The purpose is to

see and deal with each other as two distinct individuals, and to learn to give one another the space to be unique.

1. Draw a human figure on a large sheet of paper.
2. At the top of the head, write *What does she think/dream about?*
3. At the mouth, write *What does she talk about/say to me?*
4. On the right hand, write *What does she spend her money on?*
5. On the left hand, write *How does she spend her time?*
6. At the heart, write *What does she care about?*
7. At the stomach, write *What does she worry about?*
8. At the feet, write *What does she stand for/believe in?*

Spend 20 minutes answering each question on the figure using words, cut out pictures from magazines, or drawings on the portrait. Give each other plenty of space to work. When you're finished share your portraits with each other.

What did you learn about how the other person sees you? In what ways do you feel "known" by the other person? Does anything in the portrait surprise you? How can the two of you use what you've learned in your relationship?

From Girls, Inc. at <http://www.girlsinc.org>

Listening In

What are the hardest emotions for girls to deal with? Here's a sample:

"I struggle with anger the most because my mom recently got diagnosed with breast cancer and I have a lot of anger inside me. It's hard to let it out."

Katie, 13

"Depression is the hardest. I cry a lot, especially if I'm tired. When I get depressed, I try tactics that help me feel better, such as drinking hot chocolate, snuggling under the covers with a good book, or taking a hot bath."

Claire, 10

"I struggle with shyness. Realizing I'm vulnerable to criticism from others is what scares me and holds me back."

Johanna, 15

"Anger at my parents. I feel alone because they're against me and I have no one else to talk to."

Carly, 11

"I pick guilt! My parents are divorced. When I'm with one parent, I feel guilty I'm not with the other. This is harder because they live near one another and there's no set visitation schedule."

Allison, 13

From "Daughters," Volume 7, No. 1, January/February 2002 issue. "Daughters" is a trusted newsletter especially for parents of girls. It includes field-tested problem-solving strategies and inspiring features designed to guide and support adults in nurturing girls and young women.

2002 Whispers & Screams Conference

Where: The Hotel at Gateway Center, Ames, Iowa

When: May 16-17, 2002

Focus: Developing Lasting Commitments to Girls: Communities, Programs & Leadership

Registration: \$90 for two days (including lunch and continental breakfast)

\$50 for one day (including lunch and continental breakfast)

For a conference registration brochure, please telephone (800) 558-4427, (515) 281-6915 or e-mail Sue.Ryan-Anderson@dhr.state.ia.us.

Keynotes: Dr. Terry Tafoya, Ph.D. – Seattle, Washington

Helen Pitts Miller, J.D. – Fort Dodge, Iowa

Dr. Melissa Farley, Ph.D. – San Francisco, California

Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School

Four of five students—boys and girls—report that they have experienced some type of sexual harassment in school, despite a greater awareness of school policies dealing with the issue, according to a new report, *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School* by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation.

According to the report, based on a national survey of 2,064 public school students in 8th through 11th grades conducted by Harris Interactive:

- ☞ Girls are far more likely than boys to feel “self-conscious” (44% to 19%), “embarrassed” (53% to 32%), and “less confident” (32% to 16%) because of an incident of harassment.
- ☞ Girls are more likely than boys to change behaviors in school and at home because of the experience, including not talking as much in class (30% to 18%) and avoiding the person who harassed them (56% to 24%).
- ☞ Girls were consistently more likely to say they would be “very upset” by all forms of sexual harassment, with the exception of being called gay or lesbian (boys – 74 %, girls – 73 %).
- ☞ 83% of girls and 79% of boys report having ever experienced harassment.
- ☞ Although large groups of both boys and girls report experiencing harassment, girls are more likely to report being negatively affected by it.
- ☞ For many students sexual harassment is an ongoing experience – over 1 in 4 students experience it “often.”
- ☞ These numbers do not differ by whether the school is urban, suburban or rural.

To find out more, go to www.aauw.org.

TEEN Line

1-800-443-8336 OR 1-800-735-2942 (TT/TTY)

www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/cahotlines/teenline/

Health information & referral service for Iowa teens and those who care about them when a teen needs to talk about their own issues. It is available 24 hours a day and is confidential and free.

2002 Courageous Advocacy Award Nomination Form

As a group seeking to assure that adolescent females and young women in the juvenile justice system receive equitable services, the Gender-Specific Services Task Force recognizes that it takes committed professionals at all levels of service provision and policy making to create meaningful, comprehensive and lasting change in how girls are served. To honor these efforts the Task Force annually recognizes a Service Provider, an Administrator and a Policy Shaper who demonstrate the characteristics of Courageous Advocacy.

Courageous Advocacy is a leadership model adapted by girl-advocate Linda Albrecht and described in *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming* (OJJDP, 1998). Leaders who exemplify Courageous Advocacy 1) challenge the process, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) enable others to act, 4) model the way, and 5) encourage the heart.

The Task Force also recognizes that it takes considerable courage for girls and young women in Iowa to thrive in spite of the challenges so many of them face. For this reason the Task Force added an award in 2001, recognizing a Courageous Girl or Young Woman between the ages of 10 to 18 who has demonstrated determination in overcoming adversity in her life and/or in challenging sexist treatment of girls in her community. Kathryn Wilson was the first-ever recipient of this award. She had faced challenges to her health and changes in her family life that affected her academic performance and her outlook on life. Yet, she was able to reach out for support and rededicate herself to school.

Do you know a committed professional who advocates for girls and young women? Perhaps he or she is a direct-service provider, a policy shaper or an administrator? Do you know a young woman who has demonstrated that special determination?

Award nomination forms can be downloaded from our website at <www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw/girls.html>. Please send your nominations to Sue Ryan-Anderson, ICSW, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319 by **April 15, 2002**.

The Task Force will honor four award winners at the Whispers and Screams conference during the Courageous Advocacy Awards Luncheon on Friday, May 17, 2002.

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The Girl Connection is provided as a service of the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force, coordinated by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Department of Human Rights.

For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Gender-Specific Services Task Force, or if you are willing to receive future issues via e-mail to save mailing costs, please contact us:

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